

## REMARKS

Claims 1 - 8 are now pending in the application. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection(s) in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

### REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 - 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Wu et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,976,199). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 as amended recites: a carrier stocker having a first plurality of carrier positions on an order-change processing side of the carrier stocker and a second plurality of carrier positions on a transfer side of the carrier stocker, the transfer side of the carrier stocker being adjacent to the single-wafer carrying conveyor; a carrier robot for transferring the carrier between an inter-process carrying conveyor and at least one of the carrier positions; and a change order robot adjacent to the order-change processing side of the carrier stocker for transferring the intermediate products stored in at least one carrier located in the first plurality of carrier positions on the order-change processing side of the carrier stocker to a plurality of storage cases, for changing an arrangement order of the intermediate products, and for transferring the intermediate products from the storage cases to the at least one carrier located in first plurality of carrier positions on the order-change processing side of the carrier stocker. The Wu reference fails to teach or suggest an intermediate product carrying apparatus with such a carrier stocker, carrier robot, and change order robot.

As best understood by Applicants, the Wu reference discloses a wafer system whereby the wafers will each remain with the same wafer carrier throughout its processing. Wu et al., Col. 3, Lines 56-59. The wafers in the Wu system are lifted from the carriers for processing at the processing stations and returned to the same wafer carrier. Wu et al., Col. 3, Lines 56-59. Wu et al. does not teach or suggest transferring wafers between carriers located in a plurality of carrier positions to a plurality of storage cases, changing the arrangement order of the wafers, and transferring the wafers back to the carriers located in the plurality of carrier positions. Rather, the Wu reference requires that the wafers remain with the same carrier throughout its processing.

As recited by Claim 1, however, the intermediate product transfer means, which comprises the carrier stocker, carrier robot, and the change order robot, transfers the intermediate products “between the carrier and another carrier.” The transfer robot and the change order robot operate such that the intermediate products are transferred between carriers, in a changed order. The Wu reference specifically teaches away from such a configuration.

For these reasons, Wu et al. does not recite each and every limitation of Claim 1. Applicants note that similar limitations are recited by Claims 6 and 8. For at least the above reasons, the Wu reference fails to recite each and every limitation of Claims 6 and 8.

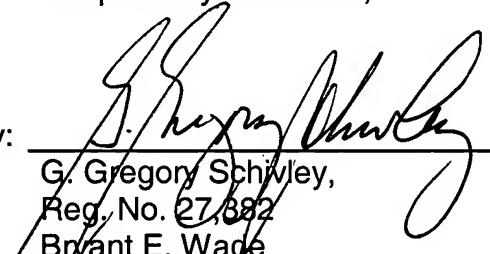
With regard to Claims 2 – 5, and 7, Applicants note that each either directly or indirectly depends from Claims 1 and 6, which define over the prior art, as discussed above. Therefore, claims 2-5, and 7 also define over the prior art, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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